

**AUGUSTA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION STUDY  
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING  
ROOM 802, MUNICIPAL BUILDING, AUGUSTA, GEORGIA  
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2004, 11:00 A.M.**

**Voting Members present:**

Ron Cross, Chairman Columbia Co. Commission  
- **Vice-Chairman**  
Bob Young, Mayor of Augusta

Terry Smith (representing Col. Robert Henderson,  
Fort Gordon)  
Dennis Trudeau, Mayor of Grovetown  
Skip Grkovic (representing Lark Jones, Mayor of  
North Augusta)  
Walter Scharer (representing Ronnie Young  
Chairman Aiken County Council)  
Michael Dennis (representing D. H. Freeman, SC  
DOT State Highway Engineer)  
Radney Simpson (representing GA DOT  
Commissioner)  
Tom Cobb, Mayor of Blythe

**Voting Members absent:**

Wayne Benson, Mayor of Burnettsville  
  
Fred Cavanaugh, Mayor of Aiken -  
**Chairman**  
D. B. Atkins, Chairman – Hephzibah City  
Council

**Others Present (N = Nonvoting Member)**

**Augusta-Richmond Co. Planning Commission**  
Paul DeCamp  
Sangeetha Rao  
Juriah Lewis

**City of Augusta**  
Travis Davidson  
Heyward Johnson  
Dennis Ellis

**FHWA**  
Carlos Gonzales  
Chetna Dixon

**GA DOT**  
Christa McKinney  
Radney Simpson

**SC DOT**  
Brian Fulmer

**Aiken County**  
Stephen Strohming

**City of Aiken**  
Sandra Korbelik

**Lower Savannah River COG**  
Wayne Rogers

**Columbia County**  
Ronnie Hutto

**Other**  
Dena Levitz, Augusta Chronicle  
Chrystina Head, WAGT

**Augusta Metro Chamber of Commerce**  
Scott McGregor

Mr. Cross chaired the meeting in Mayor Cavanaugh's absence.

**1. Consider approval of the minutes of the Policy Committee held on September 8, 2004.**

Mr. Simpson moved to approve the minutes of the September 8<sup>th</sup> as sent out. Mr. Trudeau seconded the motion to approve the minutes. The motion was unanimously approved.

**2. Status of Project Reports:**

**(a) Georgia Highways**

Ms. McKinney presented this item. The bridge replacement project on Columbia Road @ Crawford Creek (PI #0000809) will be let again this month. Right-of-way is 85% complete on the Davis Road widening project (PI #250560). Intersection improvements on SR 56 @ New Goshen Road (PI #0001419) are 10% complete. Utility relocations are causing a slight delay on the project. The bridge replacement project on US 1 @ at Butler Creek (PI #222710) is 77% complete.

Mr. Cross asked about the final design of the median on the Davis Road widening project. Mr. Hutto explained that the median is concrete only for the first 900 feet beginning at the Washington Road intersection.

**(b) South Carolina Highways**

Ms. Peterson presented this item. A handout was distributed to the Committee members.

- Phase I of the Palmetto Parkway (Bobby Jones Expressway) project is complete and open to traffic.
- Phase II of the Palmetto Parkway – Right of way plans are complete and the acquisition (title phase) has begun. There are approximately 200 tracts on this project. It should take approximately 1½ years to acquire the property needed. Construction funding of approximately \$100 million has yet to be secured.
- Georgia Avenue Extension – The project design is underway and being done by the firm of Davis and Floyd. A public hearing on the project will be scheduled in the early spring of 2005.

**(c) Augusta Public Transit**

Mr. Johnson presented this item. All three of the new low-floor Bluebird model buses are now on the street and everything is going fine. APT is waiting on the State to concur with a decision to purchase four more low-floor buses. Talks are ongoing with Lower Savannah COG for transit connections with Best Friend Express and how to improve service. Staff members will be attending the Georgia Transit Association annual meeting next week in Savannah. Bill Milar, President of AFTA, the National Public Transit Association, will be the keynote speaker.

**(d) Aiken County Transit**

Mr. Rogers presented this item. The Lower Savannah COG is completing the steps needed to assume management responsibilities over the Best Friend Express. The COG looks forward to working cooperatively with ARTS in general and Augusta Public Transit in particular.

**3. Consider approval of the draft FY 2006 Unified Planning Work Program Work.**

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. The UPWP is the annual work program for all transportation and transit planning and administrative activities conducted as part of the ARTS study. A six page summary of the draft was included with the agenda. The summary shows the work elements in the UPWP as well as the agencies involved and the proposed budget amount. All the work elements are identical to those in the current year UPWP. This work program is for the year beginning July 1, 2005. We begin preparing the document early to meet deadlines set by our federal partners. The draft will be submitted to the Federal Highways Administration and FTA by the end of December and the final UPWP will be submitted in March 2005. At their November meeting the TCC and CAC recommended approval of the draft FY 06 UPWP. Some budget figures and work element descriptions may change before the final document is recommended for approval in March. Mr. Lewis mentioned that the funding level for the 5307 program will change before the UPWP is finalized.

Mr. Young moved to approve this draft FY 06 UPWP. Mr. Smith seconded. Unanimous approval.

**4. Consider request to approve amendments to the FY 05 – FY 07 Transportation Improvement Program: Move \$5,400,000 from right-of-way for the Wrightsboro Road widening project (250510) to right-of-way for the St. Sebastian / Greene Street Extension project (262750).**

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. This is a request from Augusta Public Works to shift \$5.4 million in FY 05 right-of-way funding from the Wrightsboro Road widening project (from the Bobby Jones Expressway west to intersection with Jimmie Dyess Parkway) to right-of-way acquisition for the St. Sebastian / Greene Street Extension project. The St. Sebastian project will extend St. Sebastian along a new alignment from near Walton Way over the Augusta Canal, under the Calhoun Expressway and over to Reynolds Street; as well as extending Greene Street from its termini with 15<sup>th</sup> Street parallel to the CSX Railroad northwest across Broad Street to intersect with Riverwatch Parkway. The basic reason for this request is that the St. Sebastian project is further along and ready to go to right-of-way acquisition. The Wrightsboro Road design work will continue. The total cost of the St. Sebastian project is \$8 million for right-of-way and \$15.7 million for construction.

Mayor Young explained that next November Richmond County will hold another referendum on extension of the Special Local Option Sales Tax. If passed, part of the SPLOST will help fund right-of-way acquisition for the Wrightsboro Road project. He mentioned that the Governor's office is another possible funding source, and that GDOT is working on a concept to create an Infrastructure Bank in Georgia. This will also be a potential source of funding. Augusta is committed to doing this project although there doesn't seem to be a great constituency for it. The businesses along the road like the road the way it is.

Mayor Trudeau asked about the status of Horizon Parkway South (SR 388) widening project in Grovetown. He mentioned that it is probably the only two-lane road next to an industrial park in the entire state. Staff explained that once the travel demand modeling is completed for the Long Range Transportation Plan update – expected by the end of January – then specific projects can be identified for inclusion in the plan. The widening of Horizon South Parkway is a high-priority project in the recently completed Columbia County Transportation Plan.

Mr. Young moved to approve this amendment to the FY 05 TIP. Mr. Smith seconded. The motion carried by majority vote with Mayor Trudeau abstaining.

## **5. Consider approval of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.**

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. This is just a housekeeping item. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan was completed last year. The final document was distributed in the spring of 2003. Looking over the minutes of previous meetings, we realized the plan was never formally approved by the ARTS Committees. In addition to the Executive Summary, which was mailed with the meeting agenda, you should have already received the complete document. If not, copies are available.

Public involvement was integral to development of the plan. A project steering committee guided development of the plan and two rounds of community meetings were held throughout the region. Regular updates were provided to ARTS Committees as the plan was being developed. The plan provides a blueprint for the development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the study area over the next 20 years. Last month the TCC and CAC voted to recommend approval of the plan to the Policy Committee.

Mr. Grkovic asked how the projects are funded. Mr. DeCamp explained the projects would be considered along with the surface transportation improvement and transit projects when preparing the Transportation Improvement Program. Bicycle and pedestrian projects would thus increase the competition for the available funds. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities are already planned to be part of several road improvement projects in the study area. The plan includes five potential projects for crossing the Savannah River in order to connect bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the Georgia and South Carolina parts of the study area..

Mr. Smith moved to adopt the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. Mr. Grkovic seconded. Unanimous approval.

## **6. Update on the Intersection Accident Analysis Report**

Ms. Rao presented this item. Since the last meeting, staff decided it would be more prudent to continue to prepare the Accident Analysis Report, with available data, instead of replacing the report with studies of individual intersections. Ms. Rao distributed a handout summarizing intersection accident data for the years 2000, 2001, and 2002. The handout includes tables summarizing intersection accident trends in each of the three counties. The Aiken and Columbia County tables include data for intersections with 10 or more accidents. The Richmond County table covers all intersection with 20 or more accidents in each of the years. The Intersection Accident Analysis report has not been prepared since 1999 because of staff shortages, the amount of time needed to prepare intersection accident diagrams, and the high cost of obtaining accident data for the South Carolina part of the study area.

Mr. Cross asked why 2003 data is not available yet. Ms Rao and Mr. Strohminger explained the reasons for the delays in securing the 2003 data for the entire study area and specifically the cost associated with obtaining the Aiken County data. Richmond County and Columbia County data is available. Ms Rao said the 2003 data will be incorporated into the report as soon as it is available.

## **7. Early Action Compact - An Air Quality Initiative**

### **(a) Aiken County**

Mr. Strohminger presented this item. Aiken is still participating in the Early Action Compact even though Aiken County was not designated as an ozone nonattainment area. A project status report has to be submitted to the State later this month.

### **(b) Richmond County**

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. On November 1<sup>st</sup>, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) held a public hearing in Augusta in regard to proposed rulemaking for instituting a seasonal open burning ban in Richmond and Columbia Counties and the implementation of a Stage I Vapor Recovery program in Richmond County. Mayor Young and representatives from the Homebuilders Association provided formal comments at the hearing. DNR expects to finalize the rulemaking next week. Based on the comments received, DNR will work with the homebuilders and the City to modify the implementation of the seasonal open burning ban to minimize potential negative impact on homebuilders and the regional economy. On December 20, 2004 at 7:00 pm., DNR will hold a public meeting at the Julian Smith Casino on the Augusta Early Action Plan for Air Quality which will be incorporated into what is called the State Air Program. Everyone is encouraged to attend the meeting and make formal comments in regard to the Early Action Plan. A draft copy of the Early Action Plan can be downloaded from the DNR web site, or ARTS staff can arrange to provide a copy to anyone who is interested.

## **8. Update on Special Studies Projects**

### **(a) ARTS Long Range Transportation Plan**

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. This project is a little behind schedule, but is very close to having the base year socio economic data as well as the 2030 year projections finalized. Some modeling work will be done during the holiday season and into January with the expectation of holding public meetings in February on the Long Range Plan update. If all goes to as expected, the Plan will be adopted in the spring or at the June meeting at the latest.

## **ADDENDUM**

9. Consider a request to amend the ARTS Long Range Transportation Plan and the FY 05-07 Transportation Improvement Program by adding the following Georgia project:

- Noise Wall Barrier on I-20 from near the Belair Road/Jimmie Dyess Parkway Interchange and extending westbound approximately one mile. Program \$200,000 in FY 05 for PE activities.

Mr. Simpson presented this item. He explained that Congressman Norwood was able to secure a Congressional earmark in the amount of \$200,000 to be used for the preliminary engineering phase of this project. The funding was secured in response to complaints from residents living in subdivisions near the Interstate highway. The project has to be added to the Long Range Plan and TIP before the preliminary

engineering work can begin. The preliminary engineering will determine if in fact a noise wall is warranted at this location. No funds have been identified for construction of the barrier at this time.

Mr. Simpson moved to approve this amendment to the Long Range Plan and TIP. Mr. Trudeau seconded. Unanimous approval of the motion.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Mayor Young told the Committee that Augusta has had preliminary discussions with state and federal transportation officials about the concept of constructing a ramp connecting Lover's Lane to I-520. This would provide employees at industries located along Columbia Nitrogen Drive and Lover's Lane with an alternative way to evacuate the area in the event of an emergency. Currently Columbia Nitrogen Drive is the only way in and out of the area.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 12:00 P. M.

George A. Patty  
Project Director